

SECURITY INFORMATION

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COUNTRY USSR/East Germany

REPORT NO. [REDACTED]

SUBJECT Career of Otto Steinbrück

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1. Otto Steinbrück is a Hungarian, descendant of a noble family of German origin, perhaps related to the barons von Steinbrück. His father, an officer, died very young. As a Honved officer, Otto Steinbrück was captured by the Russians about 1915 and, during the Revolution, became a convert to Bolshevism. In the Civil War he served in "Smersh" ("Death to Spies," sometimes wrongly translated "Death to Traitors"), which was a special section of the Cheka, or OGPU.

2. From 1922 on, he was at the head of the VIII Section of the OGPU (Baltic states, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary). In 1923, during the preparations for armed revolt in Germany (which was eventually called off, by the Central Committee of the German Communist Party), Steinbrück visited Germany several times. His base at this time was the Soviet Embassy, Berlin. He organized and supervised the defense force of the German Communist Party.

3. In this way, he came into contact with Wilhelm Zaisser. Later, in Moscow, Zaisser was on personally friendly terms with Steinbrück. With his mostly Jewish colleagues in the OGPU, Steinbrück had little personal association, since he worked from twelve to fourteen hours a day and spent Sunday quietly with his wife.

4. The following episode is characteristic of Steinbrück. Toward the end of the twenties, his mother was living in a home for the aged in Budapest, under wretched conditions. He got word of this through a young friend, then an agent of the IV (Intelligence) Section of the Red Army staff. Steinbrück replied, "It would be easy enough for me to support my mother financially, but what do I care about this bourgeois woman? Mother love is sentimental bourgeois nonsense."

5. Steinbrück has excellent manners, speaks German without an accent and also very good French and English. In service, in spite of his brutality, Steinbrück took a correct and incorruptible attitude. He took no part in political squabbles: "As a Chekist, I am an instrument of the political directors, otherwise nothing."

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6. After the liquidation of Yagoda, most of the associates of the Cheka chief who had served so long were "purged." Steinbrück, however, held his job. He had clearly had no relations whatever either with his chiefs or with his associates.

7. Steinbrück is highly intelligent, even though his cultural interests are very narrow. He concerns himself only with military, police, and intelligence problems and matters of that sort. In association with officers or the Soviet aristocracy, he is very adaptable. He can be tactful and polite, or brutally frank.

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